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## Black Earth and Ivory Tower: New American Essays from Farm and Classroom

John J. Fry  
*Trinity Christian College*

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advice to a broad audience, and is a valuable guide for anyone studying the histories of communities, organizations, or prominent figures.

*Black Earth and Ivory Tower: New American Essays from Farm and Classroom*, edited by Zachary Michael Jack. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005. xxv, 312 pp. Illustrations. \$59.95 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

Reviewer John J. Fry is associate professor of history at Trinity Christian College. He is the author of *The Farm Press, Reform, and Rural Change, 1895–1920* (2005).

*Black Earth and Ivory Tower* is a collection of reflections by scholars who also have some connection to farming. With a few exceptions (several historians, agricultural specialists, and a classicist), the authors are literary scholars or writers. Most grew up on a farm; some came to farms as adults. All consider carefully what farming and rural life mean to their lives as academics. Some authors are more successful than others in evoking the agricultural world they grew up in or experience today. Treatments range from mild nostalgia for previous eras to hard-nosed descriptions of current farming practices. The majority of these short pieces (they average about ten pages each) were written for this volume, although some are excerpts from books, essays, or articles. Anyone familiar with agriculture or rural life during the twentieth century will find selections they appreciate. The various contributors' pictures of both farm and academic life will resonate with readers with rural backgrounds—or a rural present—who also teach in colleges or universities.

The individual pieces of this anthology mainly provide brief expositions of important ideas, not extended arguments. The preponderance of the contributors—21 of 35, if one counts the editor—either grew up in the Midwest or have other ties to the Midwest that are described in their pieces. Ten have links to Iowa. As a result, there are lyrical descriptions of midwestern landscape and farm life and incisive analyses of recent developments in the economy of the region. Overall, the book provides plenty to think about for both farmers and academics, especially in the Midwest.